

Cub Salvage Project

Proposed Action

I. Introduction

The Lakeview Ranger District is proposing to salvage fire-damaged trees and treat green stands by pre-commercial thinning within the perimeter of the Grizzly Fire. The lightning caused fire began the evening of July 12, 2002. The analysis area includes approximately 5825 acres, including 3760 acres of National Forest System lands and 2065 acres of private lands on the Lakeview Ranger District within: T. 38 S., R. 18 E., Sec. 13, 14, 15, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 34, 35, 36; T. 38 S., R. 19 E., Sec. 19, 29, 30, 31; T. 39 S., R. 18 E., Sec. 1 and 2 (see map). The analysis area encompasses the Muddy and Cottonwood subsheds of the Thomas and Cottonwood Creek watershed within the Goose Lake basin.

The analysis will consider the effects of pre-commercial thinning green stands and salvaging fire damaged trees in excess of those needed to meet Fremont National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (1989, as amended) (FLRMP) standards and guidelines for wildlife, riparian zones and soil productivity.

The area is characterized by ponderosa pine and ponderosa pine/white fir/mixed-conifer forested stands, interspersed with young plantations. These species will quickly lose commercial value and suitability for sawtimber rapidly following fire damage. The burned area had been logged on an overstory removal basis, with the most recent activity occurring in 1987. Perennial fish bearing streams within the analysis area include Muddy, Cottonwood and Tom Young Creeks. Other intermittent streams are present within the analysis area. Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas (RHCAs) for perennial streams, as well as for intermittent streams within the project area, will be incorporated into project proposals. A Bald Eagle Management Area (BEMA), Management Area 2, is located in the northeast portion of the analysis area.

II. Proposed Projects

A. Salvage of Fire Damaged Trees

The Proposed Action includes harvesting approximately 1700 acres of burned timber within ponderosa pine and mixed conifer stands. An initial volume estimate of salvage timber is approximately 7.6 million board feet (mmbf). Ground-based as well as aerial logging systems will be considered. About two miles of temporary roads would be constructed for use during harvest operations. This would include utilizing existing roadbeds of roads previously closed but opened during the fire suppression effort and firelines constructed during fire suppression. These roads would be rehabilitated and closed following salvage.

Most wildlife species rely on moderate to high levels of snags and down logs for nesting, roosting, denning and feeding. FLRMP standards and guidelines for snags and downed wood were determined to represent the minimum numbers required for 100% of potential population levels of primary cavity excavators. The Proposed Action would retain a minimum of 4 snags per acre to be distributed over the project area. Of these snags, 75% would be greater than 15" diameter breast height (dbh), with 20" dbh snags preferred. The remainder would be between 10" and 15", with 12" dbh snags preferred. Snags would be dispersed in designated reserve clumps and as designated individual snags throughout the project area. Snags that are representative of the species mix of a given site would be selected.

Down logs, where present, would be retained at levels to meet the FLRMP standards and guidelines. Standards and guidelines specify leaving 100 to 140 lineal feet per acre in mixed conifer stands and 80 lineal feet per acre in ponderosa pine stands. Where current levels of down logs are deficient, material would be recruited over time as snags naturally decay and fall to the ground.

B. Non-Commercial Stocking Level Control in Green Stands within Fire Perimeter

Within the fire perimeter, there are several high density, multi-storied mixed conifer stands that are still predominately green. The understory of these stands (approximately 251 acres) would be pre-commercially thinned using prescriptions designed to reduce tree densities and enhance development of sustainable conditions.

C. Conifer Planting

Approximately 2300 acres of burned area would be planted with ponderosa pine and incense cedar seedlings, including about 60 acres of existing plantations that were affected by the fire. These would be planted at between 200 and 400 trees per acre with consideration given to habitat needs of bald eagles, mule deer and riparian areas. Burned acres that cannot be planted because of high rock content would be allowed to regenerate naturally over time.

D. Grazing Management

Livestock grazing of the allotment pasture that is within the fire perimeter would be deferred until after seed set, approximately the middle of July 2003, to allow the re-establishment of vegetation. Grazing management would be achieved through coordination with the permittee.

E. Road Management

No new specified road construction is proposed in association with any of the management activities included in this proposed action. Some reconstruction of existing roads may be necessary to protect resources during hauling activities. Rock buttresses would be installed on Forest Road 387 to prevent further slides. In response to the increased erosion potential associated with the fire, roads will be considered for improving drainage through the installation of appropriately sized culverts for cross drainage. Rolling drain dips and waterbars would be installed as necessary through regular maintenance activities.

III. Purpose and Need

Forest Plan Direction (Desired Future Condition)

The burned area does not provide desirable habitat conditions for mule deer as described in the FLRMP and there is increased erosion potential associated with roads occurring in the burned area. The project area is primarily allocated to Management Area 5 (MA 5) in the Forest Plan. This MA is allocated for commercial production of saw timber, and forage for domestic livestock, within Forest-Wide standards and guidelines for all resources including wildlife habitat, soil and water.

It is the intent of the FLRMP within the Lakeview Federal Sustained Yield Unit to contribute to the economic stability of the participating communities. The FLRMP establishes an objective in MA 5 of creating a healthy forest condition characterized by a variety of age classes, through control of stocking levels, species mix, and protection from insects, disease, and other damage. Regional Forester's Forest Plan Amendment #2 (1995) modified the Forest-wide standards and guidelines by directing that a balance be struck between Forest Plan objectives for timber production and maintenance of late and old seral structure. Within green stands proposed for non-commercial treatment, Amendment #2 directs that vegetative treatments be designed to encourage the development and maintenance of large diameter, open-canopy structure. The northeast portion of the burned area contains lands allocated to Management Area 2 (MA 2) in the Forest Plan. This area is to be managed specifically for providing sufficient habitat for bald eagles including; an abundance of mature/over mature trees for nesting/roosting platforms, a minimum amount of disturbance from people and an abundance of food. Many of the desirable habitat characteristics of this area have been altered by the fire occurrence. The proposed action is designed to help move the project area towards desired conditions described in the Forest Plan.

Existing Condition

The area is currently characterized by fire-killed ponderosa pine and ponderosa pine/white fir/mixed-conifer stands, interspersed with young fire-damaged plantations. These species quickly lose commercial value and their suitability for saw timber rapidly deteriorates following fire mortality. The few stands that remain predominately green consist of high density, multi-storied structure mixed-conifer species.

Need For Change

- There is a commercial value for fire-damaged timber for wood products and to support the local economy.
- The sustainability of forests through reducing densities of the under story tree component, enhancing the vigor of existing large trees and promoting the development of large trees in the future through non-commercial thinning of green stands.
- Plant non-stocked areas that were burned to attain desirable vegetative conditions in a manner that addresses habitat for bald eagles, mule deer and riparian areas.

- Recover the forage resources within the burned area.
- Recruit large woody debris, reforest RHCAs and reduce sediment transport associated with roads to maintain or improve water quality in compliance with the Inland Native Fish Strategy (INFISH) guidelines.
- To reduce erosion potential associated with roads in the fire area.

Decision Framework

The decision will include design features or mitigations to make them consistent with the standards and guidelines of the Fremont LRMP as amended.

IV. Initial Issues/Concerns

- **Loss of commercial timber value
- **Snag and downed wood habitat
- **Region 6 Sensitive species--Goose Lake sucker, redband trout, Pit Sculpin, Pit roach, Pit-Klamath brook lamprey and Goose Lake tui chub
- **Cultural resources
- **Protection and development of large ponderosa pine trees
- **Bald eagle habitat
- **Potential spread of noxious weeds
- **Soil productivity
- **Forage resources

V. Maps (Attached)